

Chapter 1

Lil'ist Loren

This isn't the easiest to remember, of course—who can actually remember being 1 or 3? I can maybe tell you facts about when I was 4, but those memories are not linear. So maybe the moment wasn't 4 or 5, but it's something I remember that was early on. I don't always think of time in a straight line anyway. That's even harder to explain. I guess my imagination creates whole worlds of past, present, and future sometimes in an instant, and it's like a whole life flash, but it's never come close to being anything like the letdown life really is. Even at a young age, I can remember reality slipping in and out. All it took was an image of a story, cartoon, poster, or a word, and I might drift into somewhere worth being. Based on stories from friends of family, family, and what I remember from VHS home movies, this is young Loren's adventures.

I was born July 25th, 1990, premature by 2 months I think. Part of this was only having one testicle at birth, needing steroids, and being in an incubator. I had two exploratory surgeries in case the other testicle was lodged somewhere and could turn to decay or cancer. My great-grandma would say that it was far too drastic and an X-ray or ultrasound would have been safer and faster. Maybe the doctor liked cutting open babies as some kind of gore fetish. Either way, it's all over now, and I definitely don't remember. I lived in an apartment in Everett just four minutes from great-grandma. Later, my dad lived there again, and I saw it as a teenager. I was told that I enjoyed the company of an anaconda that was a pet next door. My mom was a model? But worked at Toys "R" Us? I don't actually know. And my dad was a musician and was in the Navy, but soon started several businesses that didn't last long? I was only trouble—active beyond that of other children. I was often in my own world, trying to escape where I was.

One of my earliest thoughts I can remember is: Why did I learn English? Why do I communicate with people? Why wouldn't I learn something else and forget this language? It's not meant for me to speak to the adults. I spent years of my life regretting learning how to speak—even at times hating my ability to communicate in any way. Even my eyes became this thing I wanted to remove. Why speak? Why see? Why be here? I have thought that forever. I'm thankful now I can still see, and read, and now I can write. I've found writing—even if it's bad—a great way to calm my mind.

Then art happened. I don't think I understood when it really hit me what I was doing. I remember my great-grandma loving that I could make an almost perfect circle, but I was always so disappointed I couldn't convey my actual thoughts in image form. Even now I can't create the detail in my head—depth within depth, images within themselves, textures and emotions that all combined into something on a dead tree. But art was how I could capture a moment of a different reality that I went to instead of where I was then. I never tried to get better at art till much later, assuming I could never get close to what I saw in my mind—which is to this day true—but I got better regardless. Me and great-grandma were together a lot as my dad was running a business (music store, computer store, I forget the other thing). But maybe that's where my want to be a part of a small business comes from. My mom was...? No idea.

I didn't really have friends. I was not interested in other kids at all. If anything, they were a threat to my very existence and they destroyed the reality I wanted to create. They just breathe and exist. Humans were weak and in the way. Children are mindless, obnoxious, irritating, and gross. I know I wasn't the cleanest or smartest or strongest, but I never saw myself as one of them. Of course, there was always the kid next door. Later I did make friends, but littlest Loren didn't really do that. I was aggressive, lost in thought, and never stopped moving—the ADHD, ADD, ODD, autism, Asperger's, etc.

I do remember my parents arguing over medication or no medication. But that went on into young Loren. My aunt told me I would always threaten to fight her. My grandma says I was just a handful of energy. Even though I was always around my mom and dad, I hardly remember them.

I remember more about Rugrats, Ninja Turtles, Spawn, and Batman. I remember asking for drums, then realizing I'd need to be two people to play with myself in a band, but not wanting to make friends. By that point I lived in another house next to a Safeway that my ex-wife's mom worked at. And my later best friend Joe went there often with his family. I was much more interested in the fruit stand next to it than the Safeway. I actually don't remember going into that Safeway more than a single time, and I don't remember why I was there. I remember holding a white plastic bag and that's it. I think I had my black bike with neon green splatter paint, so I might have been older...? Again, what's a straight line in time? I was 3 when my sister was born. I have two sisters and I'm the oldest, but I wanted nothing to do with my siblings for years and years. My sister thinks I was jealous of my parents' time, but I think it was the crying and a change to the environment—to the reality I was forced into—and it was just almost like a forced other person I would be forced to use language with. My two parents were enough reality, enough communication for me to deal with. I remember oftentimes eating felt like it tied me to reality in a way I didn't want. Feeling anything pulled me into this space, this life. I didn't want to feel, to see, to speak, to be. But there I was in a house that was... blue? Just there. We had a jungle gym in the backyard. I know I used it sometimes. I also loved getting naked and laying in the mud, but unable to hold still, that lasted moments.

My mom killed a mouse one time and I thought: Why would she kill the mouse when the people are the problem? Everyone around us is just around. There was a mini-mart that sold milk. I was given money to get more milk regularly. Later, before we left that house, I formulated a plot that the milk went up 5 cents and slowly got enough money to buy a candy bar. I like chocolate. But they found out the milk wasn't more expensive and my explanation wasn't good enough. I at one point stole a very small plastic owl from a different store down the street, but turned myself in. I think. My dad often went there for a yellow newspaper called The Little Nickel, and I remember wondering how that paper was equal to 5 cents, but never remember asking what its contents were. Later, when I was older, I found out it's like Craigslist.

When I stayed with my great-grandma one time, I had a ball and she claimed if I threw it at the window the glass would break. I thought this was impossible. Glass is hard, cold, and used to stop people from breaking into your house. It keeps monsters out. It can't break. So I threw it directly at the glass door just to find out anyone could just get into your house at any time because we like glass. I like glass

too, but for art, not windows. I spent a lot of time with great-grandma. This was all due to everyone working a lot. But that's where I get confused in the story. I do remember this part for sure.

Most kids are scared of the dark, for sure, but I guess my fear comes and goes, as I was put in a car seat in the dark in the basement. Now for how long? I really don't remember. I was off in another world most of that time. I know there was a raccoon. I thought up and down was a monster lurking just inches away from me. But one day I learned to escape. That day I learned to escape, my great-grandma sent my uncle over to get me and bring me to her house. I got free and tried to climb a foosball table and it fell on me. How long was I holding it up? But he found me stuck under a table. But somehow he knew I was in the car seat? I don't remember how that came to be connected. Maybe I told him. I don't remember. I know everyone thought it was a big deal, but the isolation was both scary and helpful at the same time. I spent a lot more time with great-grandma, but I'm sure I was put in time-out down there again later with a new seat or a new lock? Or maybe I'm not thinking linearly?

But of course, I only got stronger, and a seat could not stop me from doing things throughout the day. I got sick, but this might have been kindergarten Loren, not lil' Loren. I took a whole bottle of pills, hoping to leave my old body behind for a new, stronger body that could leave this place. But my dad made me throw up the pills, making me not have superpowers.

I remember my dad asking me if I liked Betty Boop, and all I could think is that she smelled the same as my mom, so I didn't like Betty Boop because of an implied smell.